FRONTLINE

Looking for Mao

FRONTLINE # 115

Looking for Mao

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INTRODUCTION

JESSICA SAVITCH
It's been just six years since the death of Mao Zedong...one of the most legendary leaders of modern times. But in those six years, what's happened to the revolution he left behind may be one of this century's biggest surprises.

Tonight on FRONTLINE: a journey through China, looking for Mao.

Ten years ago American reporters went to China for the first time, after a quarter of a century of being shut out. And one of the first broadcast journalists to make that journey and to make a film about it was Irv Drasnin, a China specialist. Tonight you'll see his newest film made for FRONTLINE -- ten years later.

When he first went, Mao Zedong was alive. His supporters -- led by the gang of four -- were still in power. The cultural revolution had not yet ended.

Now it's different. Over 40,000 American tourists and even the "Love Boat" will visit China this year. Along with all the other emotions Americans have felt about China during this century, there's still room for discovery -- and surprise -- as Drasnin discovered late last fall when he returned to China. This then, is his report. It is called..."Looking for Mao".

IRV DRASNIN
A November morning in Peking at the Monument to Revolutionary Heroes, six years after the death of Mao Zedong. Here, in the vast square of the Chinese capital forms a silent procession...stirring images familiar, yet obscure, to outsiders. For millions of Chinese, it's an occasion to stir the memory.

Mao died in 1976 at the age of eight-one, after years of sometimes torturous twists and turns in Chinese life, and ten years of upheaval known as the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution isn't Mao's only legacy, but it's the one on the minds of most Chinese.

When Mao died, a torn and divided Communist Party debated what to do with his body. It built this mausoleum. Today, the leadership's concern is what to do with Mao's spirit...the legacy of Maoism, which reached a crescendo in 1969 at the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party.

This official Chinese film of that event may now be buried deep in some Peking archive, but it remains close to the surface of Chinese life.

NARRATOR, FILM OF NINTH PARTY CONGRESS
"The Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China is convened at a time when great victory has been won in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, personally initiated and led by Chairman Mao."

IRV DRASNIN
In this century, no leader has so stirred the blood of so many. But in this celebration of Mao, there was a hidden struggle among China's leaders... over how to fulfill the promise of the revolution.

Only ten years ago, many in the world saw in China the promise of Mao's utopian vision: social and economic equality motivated not by self-interest but by self-sacrifice. But for many Chinese, it was an equality of the poor...in a poor country that was isolated, almost alone in the world.

Mao wanted to change not only how people live but how they think. The world saw this, and didn't know what to think: a frenzy that often turned violent -- all political and cultural expression defined in the pages of Mao's Little Red Book -- in the hands of millions of devoted youths, the Red Guards. Mao declared his way the road to socialism, and accused his opponents of taking the road to capitalism. But his declarations of victory were premature.

Lin Biao, Mao's designated successor, is dead. Jiang Jing, Mao's wife and her supporters -- the Gang of Four -- are in prison.

But take a good look: seeing and hearing this China of the 1960s and 70s, it's impossible to imagine the China of the 1980s, the China you are about to see.

NARRATOR, FILM OF NINTH PARTY CONGRESS
"Let the whole party unite, let the people of the whole country unite, hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong thought. Be resolute, fear no sacrifice, and surmount every difficulty to win victory."

IRV DRASNIN
Mao and Maoism seemed a permanent monument carved in stone. But amid the fury of the Cultural Revolution, there was a stillness, of the mind...of voices that until recently could not be heard.

(NEW SCENE)

Why do you think there was a Cultural Revolution?

STUDENT
Oh this is very complicated.

STUDENT
I think Chairman Mao thought there were capitalist roaders in every leading position and they - he wanted all these people be out.

STUDENT
To be got rid of.

STUDENT
And at that time we believed him. I worked with other students to build this statue.

IRV DRASNIN
This statue of Chairman Mao.

STUDENT
Yah, Yah. We worked there. Bad time for us, you see.

IRV DRASNIN
In the glorification of Mao, there was a silence, a conformity of the arts, in literature, drama and music.

Looking for Mao, we still found the old images and slogans fading beneath the messages of a new leadership. But the silence has been broken.

STUDENT
I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia...

IRV DRASNIN
For students in Peking, many of whom couldn't have gone to college because of their parents -- professionals and intellectuals -- were among the chief targets of the Cultural Revolution...there could be a hidden meaning here.

STUDENT
...will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

IRV DRASNIN
Martin Luther King spoke about his dreams for America.

STUDENT
Yeah.

IRV DRASNIN
What are your dreams for China? What dreams do you have here in your country?

STUDENT
The four modernizations.

IRV DRASNIN
What does the four modernizations mean, to you?

STUDENT
Scientific...

IRV DRASNIN
No, not just the categories. In terms of your lives, what does that mean for you?

STUDENT
Freedom. Everybody is equal under the law.

STUDENTS (Singing)
"We shall overcome/We shall overcome/We shall overcome some day/Oh deep in my heart/I do believe/We shall overcome some day/The truth will make us free/The truth will make us free/The truth will make us free some day/Oh, deep in my heart/I do believe/We shall overcome some day./We shall overcome/We shall overcome/We shall overcome some day/Oh, deep in my heart/I do believe/We shall overcome some day."

IRV DRASNIN
We went to China looking for Mao, looking for change...starting here, at the Gate of Heavenly Peace, where Mao once stood to review the Red Guards, perhaps reliving his own youth.

Now, as before, Chinese insist they're taking the road to socialism. Now, as before, there are limits in Chinese life, and to what foreigners can see of it. But there's also change. There's no telling what Mao would think if he could see China today.

Not 50 yards away, just behind Mao's portrait and just outside the entrance to the Forbidden City, Chinese tourists are posing for these portraits. Whether riding the dragons of some dynasty past, or posing in the family car that's yet to be, ideological limits don't apply to dreams or to who may have them.

But there's more than symbolism here, especially for young Chinese -- the two-thirds of the population under 35 -- whose dreams include a new direction for the revolution.

STUDENT
I think the emphasis of our social life is changed. That means we put more emphasis on economic development, and people all like that, including me.

IRV DRASNIN
What does that mean to you?

STUDENT
That means we all have better living conditions and the country will be flourishing.

IRV DRASNIN
Among these students of journalism and English in Shanghai, there's hope and renewed expectations. There's also the shadow of past disappointment.

STUDENT
During the Cultural Revolution - yah - you see I'm from an intellectual family. My mother is a doctor, my father is a teacher and we have, I have two brothers, two sisters. Four of us were sent to the countryside to work as peasants, and I couldn't finish my university study here and was sent to work on a farm. I hate that. That's a terrible time.

IRV DRASNIN
What about today? How important is politics today?

STUDENT
Now, I think everybody feels freer to speak. That is a very big change, I think.

IRV DRASNIN
Peking University is where the first student banners were raised in support of Mao's Cultural Revolution...a time when almost anything foreign, down to the cut of one's hair, or clothes, was vilified. No longer.

STUDENT
Lifestyle has changed a bit as well. People are wearing more colorful clothes, like this jacket. During the Cultural Revolution, you just couldn't see such things but now I think most students have very colorful clothes -- even in winter. This is not very good, don't look at this, but...you know. And hairstyle as well for girls and high-heeled shoes I think many people are wearing. So it's one aspect of change, as well.

IRV DRASNIN
Look for Mao at one of Peking's busiest corners and you'll find this bill-board: "Long Live Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong thought." Cross the street...and you'll find signs of another campaign, the hard-sell not of communism but of consumerism: a sixth-century, Tang Dynasty hero of Chinese mythology -- The Monkey King -- leaping from a Japanese television set.

Today in China, consumerism is no myth. As one Chinese told us: revolution should make you rich, not poor.

The same can be said for the media, where today you can see Western films like "Evil Under The Sun", or "Tess", or any number of Chinese films.

There's a revival of movies, and of movie stars. Along with model workers, there are models in fashion and in film. This Peking actress is posing for the latest in China's media revolution: movie posters and magazines.

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.) (NEW SCENE)
This magazine is interesting?

YOUNG MAN
Yes, it's very interesting.

IRV DRASNIN
Why is it interesting?

YOUNG MAN
Modern clothes.

IRV DRASNIN
Because it is modern clothes?

YOUNG MAN
Uh hum. Yes.

IRV DRASNIN
Do you like modern clothes?

YOUNG MAN
Yes, I like it.

IRV DRASNIN
What is in the books, what is in the films that wasn't there before?

STUDENT
Love, for instance.

STUDENT
This theme of love was certainly absent. Yes, you see, if you watch Peking Opera, say six years ago, or even longer, you only see a woman who doesn't have a husband.

STUDENT
A woman warrior.

STUDENT
Or you know, a man who doesn't have a wife. No family life was portrayed whatsoever and also I think in television plays we...we've seen quite a few on the topic of family life, like marriage, you know, what is the basis of marriage, because in the Cultural Revolution many people were just put together because they had to, circumstances made them become husband and wife but there was no love really between them.

IRV DRASNIN
Do you plan to get married?

STUDENT
I'm married.

IRV DRASNIN
You are married? And for what reason did you marry?

STUDENT
Oh, for love.

STUDENT
I'm talking about some people.

IRV DRASNIN
Love may be conquering politics but there's still a party line in China that's more flexible now. The line here is for Western books, of science and of science-fiction from Star Wars to The Winds of War.

Looking for Mao in this bookstore in Chongqing, you have to ask directions. Where Mao's works once crowded the shelves, now they are few and attract no crowds.

But there are Chinese writers who do attract crowds. The hottest ticket in Peking is for a controversial play that's sold out every performance. The play -- "These Troublesome Fellows" -- takes a satirical but hard look at contemporary lifestyles and at political styles of the Cultural Revolution.

In the cast of characters is a party official named "the dragon lady"...an ingenue who informs on her co-workers, very much like a Red Guard...a heroine with sex appeal...a hero more concerned with lifestyle than work-style.

It's a radical departure from Mao's radical politics, a recognition that the state's goals may only be attained if, somehow, personal goals can also be satisfied.

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
The playwright -- Zhong Jieying -- is also a novelist, a musician, a mechanical engineer. During the Cultural Revolution, he repaired trucks.

ZHONG, THE PLAYWRIGHT
Many of Mao Zedong's theories on art and literature are still basically correct. But in his later years, Chairman Mao became rather rigid in his thinking. He went to the extreme of placing too much emphasis on class struggle, on serving politics, thus forcing art onto a very narrow path.

During the Cultural Revolution, we were allowed to perform only eight model plays. No one hundred flowers blooming! Only one single flower was left, and not a fresh flower at that -- but a plastic flower! A fake flower!

IRV DRASNIN
If there's more diversity now, there's also discouragement -- and periodic warnings -- for those who step over the party line. Off-stage, American screenplays are among China's favorite reading...including Kramer Versus Kramer and Reds.

But just two years ago, in 1981, it was a well-known Chinese screenwriter -- Bai Hua -- who crossed the line. His script, called "Unrequited Love", was kept out of the theaters.

It's the story of a patriotic Chinese, hounded to death during the Cultural Revolution, whose daughter asks him: "You love your country, but does your country love you?"

Bai Hua was criticized for attacking the party, if not socialism...taken by some as the signal for a new crackdown on the arts. But some Chinese writers hope it's different this time.

DING LING
As for Bai Hua, actually the episode wasn't that important. No one beat him up. He wasn't humiliated. The only thing critized was his screenplay, not him personally. If anyone were even to touch Bai Hua, other writers would have nothing to do with even the criticism, even if they agreed with it. People would say: "What, beating-up people again?"

IRV DRASNIN
The arts and literature have always been a barometer of China's political climate...even for veteran communist writers like the novelist, Ding Ling.

Born in Hunan Province, 30 miles from Mao's home, she joined Mao and the Communist Party 50 years ago. That didn't prevent her from spending the 20 years until 1978 as a political exile in her own country -- five of those

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
years in prison. She'd like to believe it couldn't happen again.

DING LING
Be assured that such movements will not come up again. Besides telling you, I have to reassure myself, that those terrible events are all past. What do I have to fear? Write what you want to write, say what you want to say. There's nothing to be afraid of anymore. That's what I tell myself.

Politics can help or harm, it depends. The Gang of Four also spoke in the name of politics, which meant we had to serve their version of politics. But we couldn't do that. Politics is politics, and art is art. To serve politics alone could easily reduce art to the level of propaganda.

IRV DRASNIN
Mao had said revolution was not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture but it had become that, too.

He might have included music, in a country five times the size of America, in which only eight approved ballets and operas could be performed. Chen Xieyang had helped to write one of them.

CHEN, THE CONDUCTOR
A lot's been imported from abroad. Some classical music, like Brahms and Beethoven. Some popular songs, like Hong Kong sound. Even some jazz. Some might like pop music or love songs. There's nothing wrong with it. No big deal.

Western music was considered by The Gang of Four to be bad stuff -- not to be performed. Of course, I felt that was terribly wrong. These are treasures not only of the German or French people but of all people. The Chinese people are just as entitled to hear them. In 1979, when we could again perform this music, I was thrilled. We quickly put together a concert, including compositions by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. I found the music even more beautiful than before.

IRV DRASNIN
Is there a danger that this music that we now hear in China will again become impossible to play?

CHEN, THE CONDUCTOR
I don't think so. The Chinese people have suffered long enough. We've learned our lesson. I don't think so. I certainly hope not.

IRV DRASNIN
The 43-year-old conductor of the Shanghai Ballet Orchestra, rehearsing the fourth movement of Brahm's 2nd Symphony: nothing extraordinary, perhaps... except that while Mao was still alive, it wouldn't have been possible.

Today's music in China might also be at Mass, at Shanghai's Notre Dame Cathedral three weeks before Christmas.

Three weeks ago, this was a warehouse for dried foods...the priests assigned to making umbrella handles. Religion -- Christian, Buddhist, Moslem -- is back, within limits. The Catholic Church can exist, as long as it answers to Peking, not to the Pope.

FATHER LIEN
The Pope has always discriminated against the Church in China. Chinese couldn't become cardinals. In France, they have their own cardinals. In Italy, they have their own cardinals. You wouldn't have a Chinese cardinal in Italy. Chinese Catholics, for three-hundred years, have never had any control. Now, we've gained control.

IRV DRASNIN
The place of the Catholic Church in Chinese life also underlines one of China's biggest problems: its population, now officially over one-billion people.

Mao had said the more people the better. Today, birth control, abortion and one-child families are state policy. That means it's church policy, too.

FATHER LIEN
Birth control is a social issue, not a church issue. Right now, we listen to what the government tells us. We follows its policy. We are concerned only with matters of the Church.

IRV DRASNIN
It would be a mistake to think that significant numbers of Chinese are exchanging one faith for another. But limits aside, in China as elsewhere, religion faces the growing competition of more secular interests.

This is Saturday night and you're students and don't have to go to school tomorrow. What are you going to do?

STUDENT
I would go home this afternoon and will watch TV with my family.

IRV DRASNIN
You'll watch television with your family. Any special program that you'll watch?

STUDENT
I will follow them and they will choose Robin Hood maybe.

IRV DRASNIN
Robin Hood, one of several foreign programs that can now be seen. Not too many years ago, there wasn't much entertainment on Chinese television and no privately-owned TV sets.

This is one program, at least, that Mao might have watched too. The rebels of Sherwood Forest were not unlike the peasant heroes of Mao's favorite Chinese novel.

But don't look for Mao on television -- where each night's programming once began and ended with his image -- or here in Peking. The red neon of Mao's thought is being replaced by what -- for Mao -- was unthinkable.

Mambo, and martinis, in China...and not for foreigners only.

It was probably inescapable, ten years after resuming relations with the West. The favorite dish here: fried beefsteak, eaten with a knife and fork.

The Capitol Restaurant has been open just a year. Scenes like this aren't pervasive, but the Western presence is being felt, and not by bread alone. It goes deeper than that, as China looks for a style that fits its need for the late 20th century.

These young people aren't the only ones learning something about dining western style.

Appearances might be deceiving, but you don't expect to find uniforms like these in China.

Mao told young Chinese to study revolution, to serve the people. In a new Peking hotel, these high school graduates are learning how to serve...a buffet. Their teacher has been imported, from Hong Kong. The music is also imported, but not the piano player...a student at the Peking Music Conservatory.

But the guests, the furnishings, the architecture -- modeled after the Holiday Inn, in Palo Alto, California -- all are foreign.

So are the prices: a room costs about sixty dollars a night, as much as the average Chinese worker earns in more than a month.

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
For us, it's familiar, perhaps reassuring. For China, it's a source of financing, of hard currency, of training future managers...and of discomfort to those who share Mao's fear and rejection of foreign participation in China's development.

There are limits on the foreigner, whose role China would like to control and isolate. For now, joint enterprises like this are possible...as long as they don't go too far outside of places like Charle's Bar in the Jianguo, or "Build the Country", Hotel.

The beat of the city doesn't always extend to the countryside, where the great majority of Chinese still live and work. Here, there are more traditional rhythms. If there's bluegrass, it's grown, and used. You don't need high-heeled shoes, tailored clothes or the latest hairstyle to work in the fields...or to collect your bi-weekly allotment of cooking coal. You do need to be able to lift and carry a hundred and ten pounds at a time.

Looking for Mao, you might expect to find him here, in the fields of Sichuan Province, in south-western China. In this timeless setting, life isn't being transformed overnight. But in this village, at least, time isn't standing still either.

For local leaders like the 60-year-old head of a production brigade, who was a target of teen-age Red Guards, there's loyalty to Mao. But even here, you feel a difference.

ZHONG, THE BRIGADE LEADER
Actually, Mao knew what he was talking about. Chairman Mao and the peasants got along, we saw eye to eye. But to us peasants, Chairman Mao left some unfinished business. He had good points, and bad points.

IRV DRASNIN
How have things changed here in this commune, in this production brigade, since the Cultural Revolution, since the Gang of Four?

ZHONG, THE BRIGADE LEADER
Before, we weren't allowed to work anywhere but our assigned posts, even in our spare time. That's changed. Before, we couldn't raise cows or other domestic animals. Raising more than ten chickens was considered capitalism, more than five or six pigs, also capitalism. Now, it's the more the better.

IRV DRASNIN
For Mao, it was the bigger the better. But his dream of the commune as the ideal collective, his agrarian policy, is being reversed.

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
In part, Mao's revolution was against inequality in the countryside...against rich peasants and landlords. You still can't own land but you can build and own a house. And some peasants are getting richer than others, because the state is paying more for what they produce and because of sideline businesses, and part-time jobs, like construction.

This new house is for the brigade leader and his family, which includes his four sons and their families.

For Mao, the issue was equality. For his successors, it's prosperity...how to bring a better life to the countryside.

Change can also be found in a cabbage patch...where today, it's family enterprise and more independence that's paying off. On small pieces of land, the peasant can now grow what he wants, and sell it, for personal profit at the free market.

It was about the new economic policies that the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, said: "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." What that means for now is economics before ideology. This, then, is private enterprise in China.

Much of China's economy is still planned, controlled by the state. But in the countryside, there are more options now, for producers and consumers, and more income.

In tens of thousands of free markets, Mao's successors are accepting the forces of supply and demand and of human nature.

Evidence of higher incomes, and of rising expectations, can be found on the rooftops of these peasant homes: the TV antenna. It's also the sign of another change, throughout China: the mass consumption of an important commodity that in the past has been carefully rationed...information.

Along with the familiar stories of progress at home, in agriculture and industry, now Chinese are getting a nightly look at the outside world. At a war in the Persian Gulf...A Phillipine president...And, at the West.

Mao Zedong was alive when the door to the West was re-opened, but he might not have opened it quite so far...on television, or off.

(NEW SCENE)

What about the influence, the impact of the West on China in the last few years. Suddenly there are foreigners and foreign businesses, Western literature and films, and music and ideas. How might that affect China? How do you feel about that? Is that a problem? Could it be a problem?

STUDENT
Could be, yes, if a...well, I think so far so good, the impact.

STUDENT
There are problems but I think most people feel happy about that.

IRV DRASNIN
What are the problems?

STUDENT
You see we were brought up to believe that everything Western was bad. It's just the opposite now with young people today. They don't have much idea about the Cultural Revolution, so they know very little about things before that. And, I think they only see one aspect of Western life and they try to adopt Western ways of life without really understanding them. They tend to look at the West as a kind of paradise. You see, everything is good there and they want to follow the music, follow the fashion, you know. And they feel that everything is bad here.

IRV DRASNIN
The feeling that something's wrong here isn't limited to concerns about the impact of the West. There's also concern about what's wrong within the Chinese system...and a new willingness to talk about it.

STUDENT
In the economical field there is a big problem of bribery, bureaucracy, and some leaders, or cadres, simply take the money for their own uses instead of, you know, giving the people benefits. So, that is a big problem today.

STUDENT
And these problems are discussed, I think, in books and films -- the dark side of life.

STUDENT
That's a big topic nowadays.

IRV DRASNIN
We have seen stories in the West, some of which originated with Chinese news sources, that because of the Cultural Revolution, because of the criticism of the policies of the late Chairman Mao, that there is increasing cynicism among young Chinese about politics.

STUDENT
That's quite reasonable after such a long period of disaster. That's quite natural. But, nowadays I think cynicism is not prevailing...not prevailing.

IRV DRASNIN
It's not prevailing?

STUDENT
Yes. People may, some young people may still, may be still cynical but not, not many.

STUDENT
Yeh, well maybe some of them doubt that Communism is only a dream or some ideal, idealistic thought, not a reality, cannot be true. But I think, yeah, most of the students think that if we work hard we can get a better life. And, we're closer to communism. But I know communism is a dirty word in America. People hate communism. They don't, they, maybe they like the word socialism, but not communism. I think, but, maybe some time they get some misunderstanding of communism. The concept is quite different here than that in the United States.

STUDENT
Perhaps your definition of communism is quite different from our definition of communism.

IRV DRASNIN
What is your definition of communism?

STUDENT
All people are equal, no exploitation.

IRV DRASNIN
That's our definition of democracy.

STUDENT
Democracy, well, if that's your definition of democracy and we think it is a definition of communism, then we have more common ground.

IRV DRASNIN
Cynicism. Disillusionment. Today's college students may be recovering from Mao's last revolutionary stand. But that may not be true for a "lost

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
generation", not among the privileged three percent getting a higher education...and for those who remember that just behind the skating rink was a "democracy wall", a place where four years ago young Chinese circulated underground journals and posters of protest.

In the 1960s, Mao turned loose millions of youth, the Red Guards. They roamed the country to rid China of what was foreign and old, the ideas and icons of materialism. Today, millions of young Chinese are again on the loose -- "waiting for assignment" -- without jobs, without skills, many without the education denied them when schools were closed for years during the Cultural Revolution.

It's a problem China can't ignore, that ideology won't erase, upon whose solution China's future may depend: a problem of values, of motivation, of expertise needed for modernization.

In looking for Mao, we've found change. Alone, each change may seem ordinary...hardly accounting for the great distance China has traveled in so short a time. Taken together, they're a flood in a society left almost barren by the Maoist politics of the Cultural Revolution.

We've traveled from Peking, the political capital in the north...to Shanghai, the cosmopolitan capital on the east coast...to Chongqing and its nearby countryside in the southwest. But to take a true measure of change, you have to look for Mao here, in Hunan Province...central China, the heartland, Mao country. This is where he was born and raised, where he was educated and rebelled...where he first formed his ideas of revolution.

Things move more slowly in Hunan. If there's change here, there can be change almost anywhere in China. If China is taking a different road to socialism, this is where it must lead. Just two years ago, you couldn't take the road leading here, or expect to find an army unit visiting this house. It was closed for 13 years, destroyed by Red Guards...the home of Liu Shao-ch'i, once Mao's heir-apparent, who became the number-one target and victim of the 1960s.

By Chinese accounts, 800,000 were persecuted, 35,000 killed during the Cultural Revolution. Then, Mao told Chinese to learn from the army. Today, Liu's house and reputation have been restored and the army comes here to relearn China's recent past.

Not far away, in another Hunan village, is Mao's birthplace and family home. During the Cultural Revolution, countless numbers of Chinese made a pilgrimage here. It's attracting fewer visitors these days.

On the wall of his bedroom, Mao in his twenties...posing with his mother and two brothers. At the time, Mao was a school teacher in Changsha...the capital of Hunan.

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
Looking for Mao inevitably leads to Changsha, where he spent much of his youth...where he began his fight for a new China.

One place in Changsha where you can find young Chinese today is across the alley from the Communist Youth League...fighting space wars.

In part, the Cultural Revolution was Mao's classroom for training revolutionary successors, a future generation committed to his vision of socialism. There remains a committment to socialism, but for some, at least, the vision has shifted from a new Maoist man -- to Pac-Man.

(NEW SCENE)
Who comes here to play these games?

YOUNG MAN
Workers, peasants, soldiers -- everybody!

IRV DRASNIN
Would Chairman Mao like this place?

YOUNG MAN
Who? Oh, Chairman Mao! I wouldn't know.

IRV DRASNIN
Just as Mao once came close to being deified in prominent places today, even in Changsha, Mao is missing.

In this park, Mao's statue has been replaced by a chrysanthemum peacock. At the railroad station, where there was a Mao portrait, there's a blank wall.

Even in Changsha, walls that once portrayed heroic images of the worker-peasant-soldier-- the "good classes" of the Cultural Revolution -- now offer images of the good life.

Mao had spoken of the need for a permanent revolution. In one form or another, that's been a characteristic of Chinese life during most of this century.

It's possible that what you're seeing here isn't merely a re-arrangement of hairstyles but styles of thinking...reforms that could go to the heart of Chinese socialism.

IRV DRASNIN (Cont.)
Caution is advised: as recently as last year, official warnings were issued against so-called "corrosive capitalism" in Chinese life...from corruption, to profit-motives, to Western ways. But for now, any attempt to resurrect Mao would have to overcome a revised vision of China's future, and its past.

(NEW SCENE)
What do you learn at the university today about Mao Zedong? What is taught about the late Chairman?

STUDENT
This might be a good question.

STUDENT
He's a man, not a god.

STUDENT
Yes, that's the conclusion.

STUDENT
He makes serious mistakes.

STUDENT
We thought that he was a god but nowadays every Chinese thinks he's a man, rather than a god.

STUDENT
I think people are still, most people in China are still very grateful to Chairman Mao and other leaders for that matter because they were the people who really changed China. They made China become a strong country, as we are now today. But he made some mistakes, including the Cultural Revolution. I think, although his motives may be good (laughter) I'm not quite sure. But there were too many - I mean that period was really chaotic for China so I don't think he managed to keep everything under control. Many cadres died, many scientists died, and a lot of people suffered...intellectuals - including those people in our school, in our university, many old professors and even young teachers were criticized. So I think that was a big, big mistake. To really attack on people, you know.

IRV DRASNIN
Would we be seeing the changes that are taking place in Chinese life today if Mao Zedong was still alive?

DING LING
No, we wouldn't. He was of no use towards the end. His thoughts were all confused. He had to die.

His mind and body were already gone. The changes wouldn't have been possible if he hadn't died. It's true. I'm brave enough to say it's true. Even before he died, he wasn't capable of ruling China. Others had already taken over. Look at his pictures. He was a physical wreck.

IRV DRASNIN
This park in the heart of Peking, open now to everybody, was closed during the Cultural Revolution...to everyone but the party's leaders.

On the surface, China may seem more tranquil now, more open to new ideas and possibilities. But just as important is what foreigners especially can't see and hear...what's beneath the surface.

It could be argued that Mao is being judged by his victims, that what we hear is simply a new party line. But it's the party line that still counts in China.

Mao is missing from many public places, and from many of the policies of a new leadership, but not necessarily from the minds of those he led in revolution, over whom he ruled for more than a quarter-century.

Mao's successors have been called pragmatic, realists. It may be realistic to assume that just as they once were silenced, and waiting so now, those who supported Mao are silent, and waiting -- not persuaded by the new leadership's search for another road to socialism.

That road might lead to a future all Chinese can live with, but looking for Mao...you find he won't be forgotten soon -- either by those who shared his vision of revolution, or by those who suffered because of it.

UPDATE

JESSICA SAVITCH
The Chinese who have spoken to us in this film may not speak for everyone in China. Perhaps it's enough to let them speak for themselves.

As Irv Drasnin has reminded us, the Chinese still live in a controlled society. But it is a system that's seeking change, in which Chinese find ways to express themselves and their feelings.

Change has a momentum of its own. It would not be easy for China to return to the ways of the Cultural Revolution...to the way things were a few short years ago.

That doesn't mean that the Chinese want to be like us. But they are searching to find what's best for China...that is perhaps a question that can't be answered by foreigners.

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